

# BUPPATE



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# **Personnel Staff Meets Employees' Needs**



DPW's Personnel staff (left to right): Valerie Espinoza, Patty Cabello, Laurie Szymanski, Teresa Wiatrowski, Lori Mickel, Vickie Mondane, Kirsten Aaboe Hope, and Carl Spiron (not pictured, Darlene Spillar).

by Richard Diaz

What happened to my sick leave? Where's my mileage reimbursement? Don't I still have some recognition time on the books?

Often we turn to our Personnel staff only when something goes wrong. "But here at DPW, employees and managers alike seem very thankful for the work our folks do and we're really grateful for that," says Donna Turbyfill, deputy director for Management Services who oversees the Personnel, Safety & Training Unit.

"My staff works hard to make the employment experience a positive one," adds Laurie Szymanski,

see Personnel Staff, page 3

### Regional General Permit (RGP) 53 Renewed

When DPW crews hit the field to clear culverts or remove problem brush, in many cases they need permission. Not from their supervisor, but from state and federal agencies. That's where something called RGP 53 kicks in. It's the first permit of its kind in the country.

DPW periodically conducts routine flood control maintenance of drainage facilities to prevent flooding and erosion of adjacent roadways or flooding of residential or commercial property. The maintenance activities include removing silt, sand, debris, and vegetation from culverts, bridges, roadside ditches, drainage channels and road dips.

These activities are necessary to ensure that storm

flows can pass through these sites with minimal risk of loss of life and property damage. The frequency with which these maintenance activities are conducted varies from site to site but ranges from more than twice a year to once every five years or longer.

Many of these facilities are along natural or modified stream courses that are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), California Department of Fish & Game (CDFG), and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS).

see RGP 53, page 4



#### From the Director's Desk

PROJECTS ARE LINED UP, WAITING FOR OUR ACTION. RAIN clouds come from the west, threatening flooding and mudslides this winter. The holiday season is upon us.

We need to be ready for what lies ahead so now is the time to prepare.

You already know what needs to be done, what will need to be done and how to tackle the tough work. 2005 was filled with challenges—record rainfall and the resultant flooding and mudflows, budget wrestling, compliance with environmental issues, major projects

to plan and complete and all the while meeting the needs of our customers.

Once you've prepared for what's coming next, take some time to rest and recuperate. Spend time with your family, with friends and neighbors. Enjoy the season, be sensible and come back to work ready to face what comes in 2006.

#### **Training**

## TEAM SUCCESS by Kirsten Aaboe Hope, Training Officer

NASCAR is the fastest growing spectator sport in the world. Teamwork is critical in winning a race, and the pit crew is a vital component of that success.

#### Three rules of the road are essential to NASCAR's professional success:

- 1. Clarify and focus on what's most important
- 2. Collaborate and play to team strengths
- 3. Courageously go slow to go fast

Individuals working together make an effective team. There's a lot packed into that simple statement. During



a race, pit crews change all four tires and refuel the car in a matter of seconds. In the '80s, the average winning time was 30 seconds. Today, it takes a winning team an average of 14 seconds to accomplish the

same tasks. Teams of dedicated professionals cut the time in half. And they have to do it right! Not only the race, but someone's life is in the balance!

#### Here are the three rules of highly performing teams used by NASCAR professionals:

#### First, Clarify and Focus

- 1. Goals and expectations need to be clear so everyone knows what they should be doing.
- 2. Standards of performance need to be set so it's clear when I'm doing excellent work and when I need to improve.

- 3. Providing me with feedback on the spot helps me feel part of the team.
- 4. The most important parts of the work I do need to be measured.

#### Second, Collaborate and Play to Team Strengths

- 1. My supervisor and manager constantly assess skill sets of our team members and the best fit needed to accomplish our goals.
- 2. Then those who work well together are brought together so everyone is collaborating.
- 3. If specialized roles are needed, they're identified to clear up confusion as to who should do what.
- 4. It's really important that the roles that are needed to accomplish our goals are clearly spelled out.

#### Third, Courageously Go Slow to Go Fast

- 1. I need to ask questions boldly so I get the answers I need to do the job right.
- 2. It's most important that the job's done right, so my boss looks at task efficiency, not necessarily the time it takes to get done.
- 3. It's also important to take time to reflect and ask for input so we all improve.

Our teams are accountable as a group for our success. Coaching by supervisors and help from other team members is what brings us all along. Focus on the strengths of our team members and realize how much we rely on them for our success. Following these three steps will help to ensure exceptional team performance!



#### **Personnel Staff** (continued)

supervisor of the unit. While Szymanski takes care of the more serious personnel matters—labor relations, dispute resolution and progressive discipline—her staff still has the daunting task of addressing the needs of the more than 500 DPW employees.

Take payroll, for instance. Personnel Aide Lori Mickel and Payroll Clerk Darlene Spillar must ensure new hires and transfers don't miss a step in setting up their pay,



Darlene Spillar

benefit, and retirement options. She also runs weekly timecard reports to detect problems—wrong pay codes, missed adjustments, or unreported hours—that can hold up a paycheck or result in lost earned time.

"Please get your KRONOS in by noon on Thursdays," Mickel advises.

Or take scheduling. Aside from her administrative secretary duties, Valerie Espinoza reminds us when our performance appraisals are due, when our auto insurance is ready to expire, and other vital details often overlooked during a busy year.

Likewise, four departmental personnel officers (DPO) provide much needed direction and information to DPW staff: Patty Cabello, Land Development and Management Services; Vickie Mondane, Engineering and Wastewater; Teresa Wiatrowski, Transportation and Payroll supervision. DPOs coordinate the recruitment and selection of new staff; advise management on job classification issues; assist with conflict resolution; investigate complaints

involving employee misconduct; coordinate disciplinary actions; and assist managers in applying personnel rules and regulations fairly. "We're a supervisor's best ally for trimming the red tape," assures Cabello.

Employees are DPWs most valuable asset. "Safety's not cheap," says Carl Spiron, DPW's safety coordinator. "A reactive program never decreases the injury rate" and costs more in the long run. Do these sound familiar: *The DPW Safety Manual*? Hazard Analysis System? Injury & Illness Prevention Plan? Safety Site Inspections? Accident Review Committee? All are part of the department's proactive safety plan coordinated by Spiron. "If you don't learn, you repeat mistakes."

If Spiron sees a learning need, then Kirsten Aaboe Hope tailors training to fit it. Aaboe Hope, the staff development coordinator for all DPW divisions, processes training request forms, sets up classes, consults with outside training vendors, conducts in-house training, maintains the DPW Intranet and coordinates Employee Recognition Awards. Aaboe Hope is sometimes asked to review training projects for other LUEG departments. Currently she is looking for ways to provide more on-line training so that DPW workers can receive training at their workstations and not have to make long drives to training classes.

The Personnel, Safety, & Training Unit has contributed to DPW's success these past years. For example, worker injuries are down 27 percent from two years ago, and lost productivity hours are down a whopping 70 percent for the same period. All of which pays off in Quality First awards.

## **Talking Hard Hats Aid Crews**

Rudy Ramirez stood next to the vactor truck rumbling its jet engine-level decibels along San Felipe Road and talked to Mike Marron standing next to a culvert on the other side of the pavement. On the surface, that may not sound like a big deal, but it was only possible because of a new piece of safety gear developed for DPW.

"This is probably the best piece of safety equipment we have," Ramirez said. "We used to wear ear plugs to reduce the noise and had to take them out to hear our partner shouting to us."

What Ramirez is talking about is an integrated hardhat, face shield, ear muff and two-way radio. It's a custom piece of equipment developed specifically for DPW.

"Crews came to us with a need and we were able to work with our vendor to come up with a great



Rudy Ramirez (left) talks to Mike Marron across the street

device," said Safety Coordinator Carl Spiron. He worked with AirGas and Peltor Corporation to develop the equipment that's currently used by both Stormwater and Wastewater crews. In the past, crews used hand signals to communicate. That meant taking hands and eyes away from the job and that reduced safety, Spiron said. The new headgear is OSHA approved and Marron said it works up to a quarter mile away.

The helmet is a standard orange cap style with tilt down face shield, radio headset and multichannel radio. Volume levels automatically rise when someone speaks and drop when they stop. This adds a better measure of both communication and protection.

"This is state-of-the-art equipment," Spiron said, "and I suspect the concept will be picked up by other agencies and companies."

DPW's crews began using the equipment in midsummer.

# 5%Q155%Energy Savings: 6Q155%Q Bundle Up This Winter & Save 5 Percent

The County has a Quality First Goal of saving five per-**L** cent in energy consumption compared to last Fiscal Year. Each section in DPW has ways to save. Here are some tips to belp do your part to reach this goal.

#### **ELECTRICITY/NATURAL GAS**

- If your indoor workspace is too warm, contact maintenance to get it fixed.
- Open window blinds to warm your rooms from direct sunlight.
- For safety and energy savings reasons, do not use space heaters.
- Wear warm clothing during cool weather. It makes little sense to keep a room hot enough that workers wear hot weather clothing.
- Keep exterior doors closed as much as possible.
- Some offices or workspaces can reduce lighting without affecting productivity. Turn off as many unnecessary lights as possible. Use task lighting instead of overhead light-

ing, and light only those areas



that are needed at the time. Providing the right lighting can save up to 15 percent in energy use.

• Make sure that equipment and lights are turned off whenever you leave a room, and after hours.

- Install automatic room-lighting controls to turn lights on or off depending on occupancy or time of day.
- Change out incandescent or fluorescent exit signs with LED exit signs.

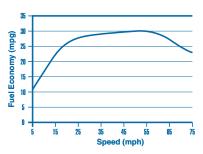
#### VEHICLE FUEL



- Properly inflated and aligned tires will improve gas mileage by 3 percent.
- Avoid long idling. One hour of engine idling equals 33 miles of road travel.
- · Adhere to maintenance schedules.
- Use air conditioning wisely.
- Carpool when possible, and plan and consolidate trips.



- Avoid abrupt stops and starts.
- Drive at moderate speeds. Gas mileage decreases rapidly at speeds above 60 mph (see chart below).



Source: U.S. Department of Energy

And don't forget to recycle paper, avoid printing whenever possible and if you must print, double side your

copies. If you need a paper recycling bin for your work area, call our Recycling Section at (858) 874-4108. These tips can help you save money in your home and personal vehicles too. For more energy savings tips, check out the U.S. Department of Energy website at:

http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/

#### RGP 53 (continued)

The routine maintenance activities have been conducted by the County in compliance with Regional General Permit (RGP) 53. The RGP 53 permit was originally issued to the County by the USACE in September 1998. The RGP 53 permit was set to expire in September 2005, but the County applied for and was granted a 5-year extension until September 2010. There are currently 965 County maintained facilities included in the RGP 53 permit for routine maintenance. An additional 123 sites will be added once data on their size and vegetation types have been compiled and submitted to the agencies.

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**Director of Public Works** John Snyder

**DPW Update Editor** Bill Polick Phone: (858) 495-5736 E-mail: bill.polick@sdcounty.ca.gov

Design & Layout Bob Lee Cartographic Services Section

> **DPW Web Site** sdcdpw.org